



## Questions and Answers

These questions have been asked by residents of Martlett Court. The answers are provided by the project teams from Westminster City Council (WCC) and United Living.

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**Q. If you could be so kind also to arrange for the action points agreed at the meeting to be recorded?**

A. Agreed

**Q. Perhaps this Q&A could be sent out to residents together with the ballot?**

A. We are limited on the number of pages we send, so the Q&A will be available to read on the WCC website, and if anyone requires a paper copy contact Lindsay Jenkins who will be happy to help.

**Q. Once the results of the ballot are known, the aim would be to have a meeting for all residents of Martlett Court hosted by WCC to go through the ballot results and confirm how some of the other ongoing issues are being addressed.**

A. Agreed

**Q. WCC to Commission (UL) to get full samples / section of both Wooden and UPVC windows, these "demonstration windows" will enable residents to see the thickness of the frame and the sash also the mullion, the details of the frame material and colour and thickness of the glass and lastly the window sill material. Can we have estimated timescale to get these samples to be given at the meeting, as this is crucial to enable the ballot letters to go out.**

A. Whilst WCC can request samples of both uPVC and Timber windows, we cannot guarantee that any samples produced at this stage will exactly match the finally commissioned product. This is due to the fact that the final supplier and manufacturer of the windows cannot be determined until works have been re-tendered and this cannot take place until a final decision has been made on the window material.

**Q. We are looking for confirmation that the companies that tender for the windows are specialist suppliers and fitters that can give guarantees of their work and of their products. Provide references of their work of similar sized projects.**

A. The proposed new windows will be required to comply with all guarantee requirements detailed within the Client Brief. Yes, these checks will form part of the standard tendering process that UL carry out. Due diligence will be carried out by



WCC, including seeking evidence of previous works similar in nature and of good quality prior to the issue of any commencement order.

**Q. Can it be confirmed that if UPVC windows are chosen there could be fitted from the inside therefore there would be any need for scaffolding is this the case?**

A. No, the installation of windows of any material would require scaffolding. The works involve working at height, and WCC have a duty to ensure that safe methods of access are in place. Furthermore, due to the external finishing details required, over and above this there is a requirement for scaffold to complete external repairs and decorations to the block as well as some elements of the electrical installation. Combining all these elements of work into one scheme makes best use of the scaffold.

**Q. The ballot letter should include that this ballot is not holding up the Major works Project (as residents have not been given any new start date). It also should include that this ballot is being carried out so residents can make an informed judgement for themselves on the issues of cleaning, ease of maintenance, and possible cost reductions, with the choice of window material, now that we have been made aware by Planning that the choice is now possible.**

A. The holding of a ballot and the preparation and submission of a new planning application will lead to a delay in commencement of works. Following the planning decision on the timber windows the scheme was otherwise ready to re-tender and progress to site.

**Q. The letter should also include the opportunity to view the samples of each window samples and some of the technical information and the benefits of both types of windows, (and of course ballpark cost figures when known).**

A. We will invite residents to an afternoon/evening drop in session where they will be able to view samples of the windows, details and drawings of the windows and discuss the options with window industry specialists. We have asked United Living to begin to seek tender costs for the respective options and will provide outline cost estimates for each property as part of the ballot.

**Q. Can WCC housing give confirmation that they have all resident full addresses for correspondence?**

A. Yes.

**Q. To save time with this process can the application for UPVC windows be prepared while waiting for the outcome of the ballot?**

A. Yes, UL have been instructed to prepare and submit a further planning application in respect of uPVC windows.



**Q. Can we have timescale on a full application being prepared if required by Planning?**

A. Approx. 4-6 weeks for preparation and submission of a new application. WCC Planning have indicated that any new application would also be referred to committee for a decision. Normal processing timescale for applications of 13 weeks or longer for applications of this type, but WCC Planning have indicated that these timescales could be shortened on this occasion.

**Q. Can it be confirmed that information on the Major works project on the WCC website is current and up to date?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Can a link to the project can be included in the ballot letter?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Can it be confirmed that the monies have been set aside by WCC for this project, as there was information given that as the costs had been higher than expected that the project may have to be placed on hold? This is separate to the reasons for the current hold up, supply chain issues, high inflation, and staff shortages.**

A. We confirm that the project was allocated a budget at Client Brief stage. Due to the current inflationary environment, this budget is likely to be significantly exceeded, but the Council remain committed to carrying out this project and would not cite this as a reason to delay. However, the Council are conscious that the increase in costs will directly translate to higher costs for our leaseholders.

**Q. Has the final specification for this project been signed off (apart from the windows). Where can we see the specification online?**

A. No, whilst the specification has been reviewed and broadly agreed final sign off and agreement on all works is not given until the planning application has been granted. The final specification is known as the Service Providers Proposals under the partnering contract with UL, once finally agreed these proposals are shared online and details of how to access the website shared in a written update to residents as part of the normal comms processes for all major works projects.

**Q. Does this Specification address the brickwork pointing on the blocks and the wiring along the blocks?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Who is responsible for the existing boiler flues and ventilation pipes in leaseholders' properties, are they to be repositioned by the contractors?**



A. Where leaseholders have sought and received permission to route a flue through the window we will advise that they will need to appoint their own contractor to facilitate the alteration required by the window installation, where possible we will also offer an opt-in service for which they will be directly charged. Where leaseholders have not been granted relevant permission we will in the first instance advise as above but will be able to enforce the works and recharge these directly under the terms of the lease if action is not taken on their part.

**Q. Confirmation that the freeholder is not going to be charge residents for protecting our garden, the only safe haven during these clearly disruptive Major Works. We see no logical reason why WCC would charge residents for positioning the contractors site huts / Portacabins just outside Martlett Court, in land that is owned by WCC.**

A. The site set up and associated cabins are a requirement of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015) and form part of the standard costs associated with these works rechargeable under the terms of the lease. Given the strength of feeling on this issue amongst some residents we will ask for general feedback as part of the consultation process regarding a preference for the location of the site set up so that we can take this into account when considering the best location. It is however inevitable that costs for locating the site set up outside the main estate will be more expensive and it is important that we make residents aware of this, extra costs will include but not be limited to additional security, costs for protection and reinstatement of the highway and any street furniture and the additional costs of units that can be accommodated within the limited space. We should be clear that at this stage no formal consultation has taken place with WCC Highways on the positioning of the site set outside the estate and there is no guarantee of permission.

**Q. Can confirmation to be given of exactly the number of Portacabin that are required by UL for these works?**

A. The current proposals allow for a minimum 4 units including an office, canteen, drying room and toilet block as required by CDM regulations, it is likely that some of these units will be double stacked. In addition, a number of storage units will be required, a final number of these will be agreed at SPP stage once subcontractors have been appointed.

**Q. Confirmation of the estimated cost of the wooden windows? How many quotations have been requested by UL for the wooden windows?**

A. Due to the delay in receiving a final planning decision on the windows these works will require re-tendering and, therefore, we cannot provide any finalised costs at this stage. UL will be required to present business cases for each element of work associated with the project. These are comprised of multiple sub-contractor/supplier quotations, sought in a competitive tendering environment to ensure value for money



for the council and leaseholders alike. As part of the window ballot process, we will provide residents with indicative cost estimates at current prices.

**Q. Who is responsible for decoration in residents' properties after installation of the windows?**

A. All reasonable making good to decorations will be covered by UL under the scope of these works. Usually, all damage following window installations is concealed by cover strips but any minor decorative damage beyond this would also be addressed.

**Q. Who is responsible for replacement blocked off windows in the bathrooms, which have been given approval by WCC?**

A. WCC as the freeholder is responsible for the replacement of all windows including those to all bathrooms. Where freeholder's permission has been sought and granted for the alteration to the bathroom that blocks off the window WCC will review any conditions of this permission, though it is likely that that all costs for alterations required to access and change the windows will fall to them. In the event that no permission has been sought all costs for alterations required to access and change the windows will fall to the leaseholder under the terms of the lease.

**Q. How are the longstanding issues with the water pressure in a number of flats going to be resolved? Which sub-contractor is going to be used and why? How many home visits have been done to check water pressure issues?**

A. There is a full upgrade to the water supply system to all blocks allowed for as part of these works, copies of the specialist reports outlining the investigations carried out, reasons behind and requirements for these works have previously been shared online for residents to review. The final specification for these works will be included in the SPP. We cannot confirm any details of the specialist subcontractor until the works have been re-tendered by UL but will be able to confirm once the Section 20 Notices have been issued.

**Q. When can residents get an opportunity to comment to any part of the specification for the Major works (e.g. communal lighting, entry phone system)?**

A. Following the publication of the SPP residents will be able to submit any comments or feedback on the specification, once Section 20 Notices have been issued observations can be given formally via the Section 20 process.

**Q. Can the fact that a number of these repairs/ replacements/ upgrades on the blocks should have been picked up by estate inspections over the last few years and have been addressed as the extra cost is being charged to leaseholders.**

**A. TBC**



**Q. We would like confirmation (copies) that these inspections had been carried out on a quarterly basis and the necessary repairs ordered, as there appears to be a number of outstanding issues that should have been picked up and resolved by now.**

**A. TBC**

**Q. Confirmation that the required Planned Preventive maintenance (PPM'S) responsibilities has been carried out on a yearly basis?**

**A. TBC**

**Q. When will a resident working group for these works be set up and how is the managed?**

A. This can be discussed with residents and led by them.

**Q. A brief explanation of the new Section 20 process as there is only one main contractor, as they are now responsible for getting the costings (how many quotations are they requested to get).**

**A. TBC**

**Q. Ideas on cost for leaseholders, we had been given estimated cost on wooden windows of £9K for a one bed flat, but they are looking for estimated cost of all the other works as we have been quoted anything for £15K to £25K. I appreciate they might not have the full cost as yet, but form their experience and similar major works project in Westminster?**

A. Due to the delay in receiving a final planning decision on the windows these works will require re-tendering and, therefore, we cannot provide any finalised costs at this stage. Estimated lessee implications are shown on the front cover of the Client Brief, but please be aware that in the current economic climate, these estimates are likely to increase by a significant amount.

**Q. What are the Payment plans available for leaseholders, interest free payment, payment when the property is sold? Available to all leaseholders not just those living in their property, as there is nothing in the lease that if you rent out your property you will not benefit from proposed payment plans available to others also timescales for the works.**

These are the current payment options available.



Invoice	Term	Payment options available
Up to £2,000	12 months	If your invoice is under £2,000 you can spread your payments over 12 equal monthly payments. No interest is charged.
£2,000 and above	24 months	If you receive an invoice for more than £2,000 you can spread payments over 24 equal monthly payments. You must complete an extended payment instalment form. No interest is charged.
£2,000 and above (Resident Leaseholders only)	60 months	If you receive an invoice for more than £2,000 you can spread payments over five years in 60 equal monthly payments. This option will not be made available where the property is sublet, owned by a company, or owned by a housing association. You must complete an extended payment instalment form. No interest is charged.
£20,000 and above (Resident Leaseholders only)	120 months	If you receive a bill for more than £20,000 you can spread payments over ten years in 120 equal monthly payments. No interest is charged for months 1-60. Interest is charged on the balance remaining at month 60 at 1.5% above the Bank of England Base rate for months 61-120. This option will not be made available where the property is sublet, owned by a company, or owned by a housing association. You must complete an extended payment instalment form.
£20,000 and above	300 months	If you receive a bill for more than £20,000, Westminster City Council is now offering a Discretionary Service Charge loan, available to all leaseholders who are unable to secure borrowing from their mortgage company or a personal loan. The service charge loan will be secured by a way of a legal charge on the property for a maximum of 25 years. Interest will be charged at a variable rate of 1.5% above the Bank of England base rate and will be reviewed annually. You will also need to pay the administration costs involved. Westminster City Council is only a lender of the last resort.

**Q. Sheridan Building has a major issue with water tanks in the roof area which literally flood into the flats below (30') residents would like assurance that the contractor is aware of these ongoing issues and it will be addressed as it may not be on the original specification.**

A. The replacement of all water tanks is allowed for in the specification for these works.

**Q. Lighting design on the walkways it was mentioned that it seems that it's going to be end up looking like a prison with lights everywhere.**

A. The new lighting design is required to meet the British Standard for emergency lighting under the requirements of the building regulations, all lighting levels are calculated to achieve these standards as a minimum and this determines the number of fittings required.

**Q. The new Door entry system was specified as " standard " in the design by United Living we would like to know what that means the existing door entry system appears to be rented and we would like to know how it possible to**



**break this contract and assurance that we don't get into another rental contract as we still pay for the current repairs.**

A. The new door entry system is designed to meet the WCC standard requirements for a KMS door entry system, standardisation of this system across all WCC properties makes for more efficient management and maintenance of the system as a whole.

**M and E/Asset need to comment on the rental contract comment TBC**

**Q. It was suggested that as there is 3 block and it's known that the contractors had staff shortages as a way around this, the blocks could be done one at a time therefore less upheaval for residents.**

A. This would likely extend the contract period and increase prelim costs, the overall costs would be higher if works were carried out in this way.

**Q. Scaffolding and affecting home insurance?**

A. All residents are advised to contact their home insurer at the start of works to advise that scaffold has been erected.

**Q. Netting on Scaffolding that minimises light lose, as the flats are dark, especially the Beaumont block in the middle.**

A. All netting is specified as white to minimise loss of light.

**Q. Is it not that the bathroom windows will be the same material if we go with UPVC?**

A. The bathroom window will be the same as chosen, if timber is chosen then it will be timber and same for uPVC.

**Q. From what I understood with the wooden planning application, there was different types of material for the bathroom windows, is this not the case?**

A. The planning application did not specify a difference with the bathroom window(s). They will be timber if we proceed with the timber option or uPVC if the uPVC option is agreed.

**Q. Is the "profile" (thickness) of both window types will be the same for Planning, also trickle vents in both types?**

**A. TBC We will confirm the profile information as soon as we have it, and both will have trickle vents**

**Q. The other main issue is that the UPVC windows can flip open for cleaning? ie windows that don't have the fire regulation (balcony ones) and**





**this is not possible with wooden windows as they are casement up and down only?**

A. The windows will broadly following the current opening configurations, design details will be shared at the resident drop in and on the website. There are no proposals for windows that “flip-in” which we understand that residents have viewed on the neighbouring building on the Peabody Estate, WCC Planning have confirmed that there is no current planning permission in place for these windows. All windows are required by Part N of the Building Regulations to be accessible for cleaning.

**Q. The cover letter needs to have “some” residents removed, it can say a number or residents have asked?**

A. Amended.

**Q. Do tenants have a say / vote?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Confirmation of the material to be used on for the bathroom windows?**

A. As above.

**Q. Confirmation that the UPVC windows can be opened for cleaning and the wooden are casement only? this has been a contentious issue as a number of residents don’t see the justification of spending a lot of money and not getting an improvement regarding cleaning and maintenance?**

A. As above.

**Q. You mention responsibility of the redecorations of the windows 7/10 years but the current windows have not been maintained for over 20 years so 7/10 years is misleading as this has not been mourned by WCC?**

A. Whilst there are no guarantee the works will take place with this defined timeframe they are a reflection of standard industry guidelines and this information can reasonably be considered useful when asking residents to make an informed decision on the options. Tenants can report any window issues to repairs as normal, and Leaseholders are responsible to maintain and decorate the surfaces of these items which are internal to the property. Any external repair issues should be reported when noticed.

**Q. Wooden / UPVC Lifespan, where is this information taken from?**

**A. TBC** – These are industry standards for each material, until we have finally tendered the works and have an agreed supplier, we are unable to provide exact details of expected lifespan and product warranties.



**Q. A comment box similar to the site compound comment box to be included for the windows?**

A. We can include a comment box but will not be able to analyse and gather a result from the information. Leaseholders will be able to comment on the Planning Application when available.

**Q. Regarding site compound, the timescale of the half of garden being out of use need to be included.**

A. The project will run over approximately 2 years, and we are experiencing a 4-to-6-month extension on similar projects now. This is in part due to difficulties in supply chain issues being experienced across the construction industry.

**Q. The works compound costing needs to be address, these have been requested a number of times and we had been assured we would get a resolution on these issues, the councillors apparently have been involved in these issues too.**

A. As above.

**Q. The number of site portacabins need to be mentioned and the size and that the area will be used as storage area, United Living may give an example (Wharncliff Gardens NW8 have 4 Portacabins and storage)**

**A. TBC**

**Q. It is noted that you say that that locating the site set up outside the estate will be more expensive, but the same statement is not made regarding the wooden windows, this need to be addressed or removed?**

A. The higher cost of the timber windows is clear in the letter and pro's and con's.

**Q. Can you let us know what the issues are on the Q&A's?**

A. There are some outstanding answers, where possible these have been updated. However, there are still answers pending, which are highlighted. This Q&A will be a live document to be amended and added to. I've included the version number in the footer.

**Q. In the new sprint of transparency, we ask that we get some timescales responses to our emails can be agreed.**

A. We can agree a timescale of 5 working days with the caveat that we rely on others to provide information, so those we can answer will be provided in that time, and maybe some questions/emails TBC. As project managers and advocates we work on several projects across the city, and we will let you know if we are not able to provide a response within the agreed timescale.